

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
CINCPAC HONOLULU
JCRC BARBERS PT HAWAII

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 7255

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, FR, VN
SUBJECT: FRENCH FLIGHTS FROM SAIGON DURING MONTH OF MARCH

REF: PARIS 9462

SUMMARY: IN ADDITION TO INFORMATION ON PASSENGERS CARRIED ON
FLIGHTS FROM SAIGON TO BANGKOK IN MARCH, THIS MESSAGE INCLUDES
COMMENTS ON ONE VIETNAMESE MAN'S EXPERIENCES IN CAMBODIA,
RE-EDUCATION, RUMORS OF AMERICANS, EXPLOSIONS FOR UNKNOWN
REASONS IN SAIGON ON MAR 19, THE PRESENT RICE RATION AND
FRENCH REPRESENTATION IN SAIGON. END SUMMARY.

1. AIR FRANCE FLEW FOUR OUT OF FIVE SCHEDULED EVACUATION
FLIGHTS FROM SAIGON DURING MONTH OF MARCH FIRST ONE (MAR 3)
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CONCELED BECAUSE VIETNAMESE HAD NOT YET RENEWED BIMONTHLY
AGREEMENT AUTHORIZING FLIGHTS. FLIGHTS OF MAR 10, 17, 24 AND 31
CARRIED TOTAL OF 524 PASSENGERS OR AVERAGE OF 131 PERSONS,
EACH. PASSENGERS CONSISTED OF 254 FRENCH, 192 VIETNAMESE,
5 JAPANESE, 19 CAMBODIANS, 29 CHINESE, 1 GERMAN, 13 KOREANS,
2 SPANISH, 2 INDIANS, 3 FILIPINOS, 2 SENEGALESE, 1 BELGIAN,
1 CANADIAN PASSENGER.

2. PASSENGERS ON MAR 31 FLIGHT CONSISTED LARGELY OF ELDERLY PERSONS GIVEN PERMISSION TO JOIN THEIR CHILDREN ALREADY OUTSIDE VIET-NAM, WOMEN WITH SMALL CHILDREN AND SOME TEENAGERS. NO NATIVE -BORN FRENCH APPEARED TO BE ON BOARD, ALTHOUGH 44 PERSONS WERE LISTED AS FRENCH. WHERE THERE WERE ABLE-BODIED PERSONS THEY WERE TRAVELLING UNDER VARIOUS "COVERS" ONE HAD ARRANGED A MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE WITH A VIETNAMESE WHO OBTAINED A FRENCH PASSPORT AND COMMENTED THAT SUCH ARRANGEMENTS WITH EITHER FRENCH NATIONALS OR HONG KONG RESIDENTS WERE "THE ONLY WAY OUT". OF FOUR "CAMBODIANS" WHOM EMBOFF ENCOUNTERED ALL GOING TO RESETTLE IN FRANCE THREE WERE FORMER CHINESE RESIDENTS OF PHNOM PENH AND THE FOURTH A VIETNAMESE WHO SPENT HIS LIFE IN CAMBODIA; NONE OF THE FOUR WAS FULLY FLUENT IN CAMBODIAN. ALL INDICATED THAT BRIBES WERE NECESSARY TO EFFECT THEIR DEPARTURES FROM SAIGON.

3. EXPERIENCES IN CAMBODIA. WHEREAS THE THREE CHINESE SPENT A MONTH WALKING FROM PHNOM PENH TO VIET-NAM AT THE TIME OF THE COMMUNIST TAKEOVER OF PHNOM PENH, THE VIETNAMESE REMAINED IN CAMBODIA UNTIL THE END OF 1975. HE REPORTED THAT A CERTAIN NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE AND CHINESE RESIDENTS OF PHNOM PENH WERE PLACED TOGETHER IN A WORK CAMP IN TAKEO PROVINCE. WITH A SIMILAR CAMP FOR KHMERS ALONGSIDE. THE VIETNAMESE SAID THERE WERE NO EXECUTIONS OF VIETNAMESE IN HIS CAMP BUT A NUMBER OF DEATHS FROM STARVATION. THERE WAS A DIFFERENT STORY IN THE NEARBY KHMER CAMP, HOWEVER, AS KC SYSTEMATICALLY EXECUTED THE NUMEROUS FORMER GKR MILITARY AND CIVIL SERVANTS IN IT. VIETNAMESE IN THE VIETNAMESE/CONFIDENTIAL

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CHINESE CAMP APPLIED FOR PERMISSION TO DEPART FOR VIETNAM, WHICH KC ACCORDED IN APPROXIMATELY DECEMBER, 1975. SOURCE SUGGESTED THAT WHEREAS ALL THE VIETNAMESE WHO DECLARED ONLY THEIR NATIONALITY WERE EVENTUALLY ALLOWED TO LEAVE CAMBODIA, LARGE NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE FEARED IDENTIFYING THEMSELVES AND REMAINED INTEGRATED WITH KHMERS. HE BELIEVED THAT THOSE STILL ALIVE REMAIN IN CAMBODIA,

4. RE-EDUCATION. INTERESTING FEATURE OF CONVERSATIONS WITH THE PASSENGERS FROM SAIGON WAS THAT ALMOST EVERY FAMILY SPECIFICALLY QUERIED HAD ONE IMMEDIATE MEMBER (E.G., BROTHER, SON HUSBAND) STILL IN RE-EDUCATION. ALL HAD BEEN IN SINCE JUNE 1975. ONE OF THOSE WAS A PHARMACY STUDENT DRAFTED IN 1970, ATTAINING THE RANK OF LIEUTENANT AND WORKING ONLY IN PHARMACY-RELATED ACTIVITIES DURING THE WAR YEARS. ANOTHER WAS A CIVIL SERVANT WHO ROSE TO THE LEVEL OF DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMS FOR THE CITY OF SAIGON. HIS WIFE HAS HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SINCE LAST AUGUST, WHEN HE WAS IN A CAMP IN FORMER LONG KHANH PROVINCE AND DOES

NOT KNOW IF HE IS EVEN ALIVE. THEIR COMMENTS PUT THE
LIE TO SRV CLAIMS THAT ONLY HARD-CORE CASES REMAIN IN RE-
EDUCATION AT THIS POINT.

5. AMERICANS. ONE MAN SAID THAT STORIES CONTINUE TO CIRCULATE OF AMERICANS BEING HELD IN THE NORTH, ALTHOUGH WITHOUT ANY HARD DETAILS. HE ADDED THAT A REPORT WHICH HE, AT LEAST, BELIEVES HAS SUBSTANCE, IS THAT SEVERAL AMERICANS ARE FIGHTING ALONGSIDE RESISTANCE ELEMENTS IN THE LOC NINH AREA OF FORMER BINH LONG PROVINCE. HE HAD NO OTHER DETAILS.

6. EXPLOSIONS WELCOMED. SEVERAL REFUGEES REPORTED HEARING AS MANY AS FIVE EXPLOSIONS IN THE SAIGON AREA ON MAR 18, PROBABLY OF AMMUNITION DEPOTS. ALTHOUGH WITHOUT ANY SUPPORTING EVIDENCE THEY THOUGHT THAT "THE RESISTANCE" DETONATED THEM TO MARK THE DEPARTURE OF THE WOODCOCK COMMISSION FROM HANOI THE SAME DAY. A NUMBER OF PEOPLE ALLEGEDLY BEGAN
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APPLAUDING AROUND THE CITY SO INFURIATING LOCAL AUTHORITIES THAT THEY ORDERED BLOCK MEETINGS TO BE HELD ON THE 20 TH, AT WHICH CARES TOLD THE PEOPLE TO STAY IN LINE AND WARNED THAT THOSE WHO APPLAUDED WOULD BE SENT TO NEW ECONOMIC AREAS.

7. REDUCTION IN RICE RATIONS. SEVERAL PEOPLE COMMENTED ON THE UNAVAILABILITY OF RICE IN SAIGON. GOOD RICE CONTINUED TO BE AVAILABLE ON THE BLACK MARKET (PROBABLY IN OPERATIONS IN WHICH PAVN TROOPS HAD AN IMPORTANT HAND) BUT AT A HIGH PRICE. AS WE HAVE REPORTED FOR SOME TIME, THEY SAID THE STATE STORES CARRIED ONLY POOR QUALITY RICE AVAILABLE TO THOSE WITH RATION CARDS. TWO PERSONS NOTED THAT THE USUAL RICE RATION OF NINE KGS PER MONTH PER PERSON WAS REDUCED IN SAIGON IN MARCH TO TWO KGS AND ONE EVACUEE OIHABUUFNOGLOHAT IT IS SAID RICE RATIONS WILL BE PHASED OUT COMPLETELY IN APRIL. EVERYONE SAW THESE MOVES AS PART OF A COMMUNIST PLAN TO FORCE SAIGON RESIDENTS OUT OF THE CITY ONCE AND FOR ALL RATHER THAN AS A MANIFESTATION OF A GENERAL RICE SHORTAGE.

8. FRENCH REPRESENTATION. FINALLY, A VIETNAMESE EMPLOYEE OF THE FRENCH CONGEN IN SAIGON WAS ON BOARD THE PLANE EN ROUTE TO A NEW LIFE IN FRANCE. IN SOME WAY SHE HAD BEEN ABLE TO ARRANGE TO RECLAIM THE FRENCH NATIONALITY SHE HAD GIVEN UP WHEN VIET-NAM BECAME INDEPENDENT IN 1954. SHE REPORTED THAT THE FRENCH PAYMASTER'S OFFICE CLOSED IN SAIGON AT THE END OF FEBRUARY AND NOTED THAT THE FUTURE STATUS OF THE CONGEN REMAINS IN CONSIDERABLE DOUBT.

9. AIR FRANCE EMPLOYEE TOLD EMBOFF THAT WORD FROM PARIS

HEADQUARTERS IS THAT FLIGHTS FROM SAIGON ARE TO CONTINUE ON
WEEKLY BASIS THROUGH THE END OF JUNE. INFORMATION TRANSMITTED
REFTEL THAT FRENCH ANTICIPATE FLIGHTS CONTINUING UNTIL
NOVEMBER IS ENCOURAGING TO US.

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